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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3181
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1464
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3515
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2901
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 000754

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: PREL MOPS ECON PGOV KDEM KG

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ PRESIDENT WELCOMES U/S BURNS AND U.S.
OUTREACH EFFORTS

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Lee Litzenberger, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In their July 11 meeting, U/S for Political Affairs Bill Burns and a relaxed and engaged Kyrgyz Republic President Kurmanbek Bakiyev welcomed agreement on the Manas Transit Center and prospects for broadening cooperation beyond security-related issues. Bakiyev sought support for the Bishkek Initiative, a proposal to hold Afghanistan-related talks in Bishkek, and welcomed our suggestion to create a formal bilateral dialogue. U/S Burns invited FM Kadyrbek Sarbayev to Washington to discuss the Bishkek Initiative and other efforts to broaden bilateral engagement. Noting the July 23 Presidential election, U/S Burns stressed the need for a fair and credible election process to sustain pluralism in the Kyrgyz Republic. The atmospherics of the meeting were excellent, and Bakiyev did not raise any past irritants related to Manas. Instead, he was intent on looking forward and building future relations with the United States. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Under Secretary Burns was joined by Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert Blake, National Security Council Senior Director for Russia and Central Asia Michael McFaul, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Central Asia David Sedney, and Charge Lee Litzenberger. The delegation visited Bishkek July 11-12 for discussions with senior Kyrgyz officials and civil society representatives on bilateral relations and future engagement with the Kyrgyz Republic. This cable reports on U/S Burns's meeting with Kyrgyz Republic President Kurmanbek Bakiyev. Other meetings will be reported septel.

President Bakiyev Reflects on Manas Agreements

¶3. (C) A relaxed and engaged President Bakiyev welcomed U/S Burns July 11 at his Ala Archa Presidential Compound and emphasized the visit's importance for moving bilateral relations beyond security issues such as Manas Air Base,

which Bakiyev claimed had dominated previous bilateral engagement. Acknowledging U/S Burns's opening comments on the Manas Transit Center-related agreements, Bakiyev noted U.S. and Kyrgyz contributions to stability in Afghanistan. Bakiyev added that the Transit Center agreements were in the Kyrgyz Republic's interests, and requested U.S. support for the Bishkek Initiative, which envisions using Bishkek as a platform for regional discussions on stability in Afghanistan and other security issues. Noting Russia's historical influence on the Kyrgyz Republic, he told U/S Burns that Russian pressure had complicated agreement on the Transit Center. Bakiyev claimed that Russia had reacted to the Manas-related agreements by taking steps against Kyrgyz labor migrants in Russia, and requested U.S. political and financial support to weather anticipated additional Russian measures against the Kyrgyz Republic.

U/S Burns Broadens the Dialogue

¶ 14. (C) U/S Burns assured Bakiyev of U.S. interest, under the new Administration, to broaden bilateral relations to encompass economic and regional issues. He told Bakiyev that the United States wanted to work with the Kyrgyz Republic to enable Kyrgyz firms to compete for reconstruction contracts in Afghanistan. U/S Burns noted the Bishkek Initiative, and invited Foreign Minister Kadyrbek Sarbayev (who was in attendance at the meeting) to Washington to discuss the initiative in greater detail. He also stressed the importance of the U.S.-Russia transit agreement, and emphasized how improved U.S. relations with Russia would complement relations with other countries in the region.

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¶ 15. (C) U/S Burns proposed creating a bilateral commission or senior policy dialogue that would cover economic cooperation, security issues, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics and other subjects. He highlighted U.S. plans to provide additional counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic, and welcomed continued cooperation that enabled Kyrgyz security services to disrupt extremists during recent operations in Jalalabad and Uzgen. U/S Burns also noted the joint economic development fund. The bilateral dialogue, U/S Burns reasoned, would provide both sides a systematic way to produce practical results that would strengthen ties between the United States and the Kyrgyz Republic.

Bakiyev Optimistic on Engagement

¶ 16. (C) Bakiyev welcomed U/S Burns's vision on how to move the bilateral relationship forward and said the Kyrgyz side would consider dates for the proposed FM Sarbayev visit to Washington. He identified areas for economic cooperation, to include development of hydroelectric resources in the Kyrgyz Republic, electricity exports to Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as other projects that would create jobs. Bakiyev emphasized the importance of employment in steering people away from terrorism and drug smuggling, but also noted that nine "terrorists" had been killed and 20 others detained in recent days in operations against extremists. He also requested expedited implementation of the existing Millennium Challenge Threshold Country Program in the Kyrgyz Republic. Bakiyev reiterated his belief that a new era of improved relations between Washington and Moscow would aid all Central Asian states as well.

Emphasizing a Fair and Credible Election Process

¶ 17. (C) Noting the upcoming July 23 Presidential election, U/S Burns emphasized the importance of a fair and credible election process that would show the Kyrgyz Republic's commitment to pluralism and democracy. He also welcomed the

Kyrgyz Republic's decision to permit a full OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission. In response, Bakiyev claimed "we have nothing to fear, nothing to hide," and said he wanted a transparent election. However, he added that he wanted to prevent the pickets, demonstrations and "illegal actions" that followed the 2005 revolution. Bakiyev praised recent legislation governing public rallies, and claimed that previous (opposition) protests had been fueled by drunkards who left too much garbage behind in the center of Bishkek. He said the Bishkek City Council's recent action to reconstruct the main Ala-Too Square into a complex of fountains had been an effort to prevent opportunities for discord there. Bakiyev said that Kyrgyz pluralism and its path to democracy were on the right track, and concluded that there was a long tradition of respecting free speech in Kyrgyz society, citing an old proverb that "you can cut off the head, but not the tongue" of a Kyrgyz.

Comment

¶8. (C) President Bakiyev clearly welcomed U/S Burns's message, and in particular the potential for broader economic and political engagement. Most important was Bakiyev's positive focus on moving forward. He did not mention any past irritants, to include the 2006 shooting incident, fuel dumping or misconceptions about previous levels of U.S. assistance. To maintain the momentum of our relationship, it will be important to move ahead quickly with concrete steps that will demonstrate our commitment to broaden our bilateral engagement beyond security issues.

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¶9. (U) U/S Burns has cleared this cable.
LITZENBERGER